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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 002133

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/FO, AF/W (ARENDR), AF/RSA, INR/IAA, DRL, INL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/24/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: FONMIN REPORTS YAR'ADUA'S AGREEMENT AND  
SUPPORT OF U.S. - UK ELECTION ASSESSMENT TEAM

REF: A. ABUJA 2132

[1](#)B. STATE 120766

[1](#)C. LONDON 2583

[1](#)D. ABUJA 1962

Classified By: Ambassador Robin Renee Sanders  
for Reasons in Sections 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Given the planned departure of Foreign Minister Ojo Maduekwe from Nigeria week of November 23 to 26, Ambassador and UK High Commissioner pushed for a Sunday, November 22, meeting with the FonMin at his residence to raise the proposed US-UK election assessment team. We highlighted all the points in reftel B, and stressed that the team needed unfettered access at both the federal and state levels, and with all institutions involved in the electoral process, particularly the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). We also stressed that it would be important for the GON to have a point person or two with whom the assessment team can work to open doors for meetings and assist with any logistical challenges. The two Chiefs of Mission also emphasized the need to have someone who is well-respected with democratic credentials and who had access regularly to President Yar'Adua to unblock any challenges the team may face in the conduct of their work, particularly at INEC. The Ambassador underscored that the assessment team was not a commitment to the President's request in reftel D, but that the useful work of the assessment team would provide all of us -- GON, US, and UK -- with the baseline challenges, key timelines, processes, and logistical problems that hinder the country's ability to hold credible elections.

[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassador added that all of INEC's senior personal must be seen to be cooperating with the assessment team's work. The UK High Commissioner, for his part, stated that his government too had strong concerns about INEC, and that the UK expected the team not to be hindered in its attempt to put together a transparent report. The Ambassador added, and the UK High Commissioner concurred, that we saw the assessment team as part of our ongoing development support, and that we did not expect any media frenzy around the team as it tried to do its work. We concluded by noting that we expected to deliver the team's report directly to President Yar'Adua.

[1](#)3. (C) There was a fair amount of exchange on INEC, with both the U.S. and UK representative highlighting strong views as to its past role and the impact on future credible elections. The FonMin shared that there was "some support" for INEC in certain quarters of the Nigerian Government, but overall there was a genuine desire, particularly with President Yar'Adua, that credible elections are a must for Nigeria, and that revamping INEC was the only way to achieve this goal (reftel D).

[1](#)4. (SBU) FonMin Maduekwe called the Ambassador from London

the morning of November 24 to say that he had met with President Yar'Adua early November 23 (before the latter's departure to Saudi Arabia; see Reftel A), and briefed him on the US - UK assessment team and our desire to ensure that the team had his support and would have unfettered access to conduct its work. Maduekwe stated that Yar'Adua was "pleased" with the proposal and agreed to the role and purpose of the team's visit.

15. (SBU) Meanwhile, things are moving forward as USAID and DFID counterparts have prepared a draft scope of work for the assessment team with the goal of having the group on the ground by early January 2010. U.S. Mission members plan to meet with the group before beginning their work to reinforce the goals and deliverables of the report.

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COMMENT  
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16. (C) We will continue to push on all cylinders here to ensure that the assessment team not only can do its job but can examine closely the role of INEC as regards to its ability, or lack thereof, to conduct credible elections in 2011. No matter where we end up on assistance, the U.S. - UK assessment team represents an important first step in our ability (as well as the GON's) to determine costs, where and when assistance is needed, and when and if we step back with our prestige, if the report shows that things are already too far off track to have credible elections. It also allows us to have a transparent written report to show President Yar'Adua regarding the personnel issues at INEC that may

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require a major shake-up despite his constitutional concerns.

SANDERS